

## THINGS YOU CAN DO

If mosquitoes are a problem where you live, make sure that you are not providing breeding sites in your own yard.

**Roof gutters** — clean out leaves and debris frequently to ensure water flows freely and does not accumulate.

**Flexible plastic pipes for downspout drainage** — Grooves in plastic pipes can hold enough water to breed mosquitoes. Treat with a larvicide.

**Buckets, watering cans, drinking glasses, plastic cups, bottle caps, or any trash that can hold water** — store indoors or turn over. If trash, recycle or throw away.

**Cans and containers** — throw away, store indoors, turn upside down, drill holes in the bottom, or empty after rain showers.

**Old tires** — recycle, or store where they won't collect rainwater. For playground use, drill water drainage holes. Call 703-324-5230 for disposal information.

**Bird baths** — change the water or flush out and clean with a garden hose at least once a week.

**Ornamental ponds** — stock with fish (*fish eat mosquito larvae*), or filter/aerate the water with a recirculation pump, or treat with a larvicide as needed.

**Puddles and wet, soggy areas** — drain the water or fill with dirt or other landscaping material. Treat the area with a larvicide

The most effective way to control mosquitoes is to eliminate or treat the standing water where the larvae live. Once adult mosquitoes have emerged, chemical controls give only temporary relief.

## ORGANIZE A NEIGHBORHOOD CLEAN-UP.

### DEAD BIRDS

Finding a high number of dead birds in an area has been a proven indicator that West Nile virus is present. Although the Health Department is not collecting dead birds, we are very interested in knowing the location of dead birds for our surveillance program. Call the Health Department at **703-246-2300**, TTY 711, to report a dead bird. A dead bird can be disposed of by burying it or placing the bird in a double layer of plastic bags and putting it in the trash. You should avoid handling any dead animal with your bare hands. Wear gloves or invert the plastic bag over your hands to avoid touching the dead bird.

## WHAT DO I DO IF I AM BITTEN BY A MOSQUITO?

If you are bitten by a mosquito, you probably don't need to see a doctor. Most people who are infected with the West Nile virus will not have any type of illness. Those who suffer a mild illness due to West Nile virus generally recover and no treatment is necessary.

Symptoms generally appear about 3-15 days after exposure and last a few days with mild disease. Symptoms of severe disease may last several weeks or longer.

### Mild symptoms include:

- slight fever
- swollen glands
- headache
- sometimes a skin rash
- body aches

### Severe symptoms include:

- high fever
- stiff neck
- intense headache
- confusion

People over age 50 are at greater risk of severe illness. No vaccine exists at this time for West Nile virus infection in humans and only supportive treatment is available for more serious cases. Testing for West Nile virus in people involves a blood or spinal fluid test and can take several weeks to confirm the results.



*This document is available in an alternative format upon request. Please call the Office of Public Affairs at 703-324-3187, TTY 703-324-2935.*



**ELIMINATE STANDING WATER**

**FAIRFAX COUNTY  
HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
Division of Environmental Health

**703-246-2300**

TTY 711

[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fightthebite](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fightthebite)

# UNDERSTANDING MOSQUITOES & WEST NILE VIRUS

Mosquitoes are more than just pesky; there are a number of diseases caused by their bite. One disease, West Nile virus, is relatively new in the United States. West Nile virus was first identified in Uganda in 1937. It is now found throughout Africa and the Middle East, in parts of Europe, Russia India, Indonesia and Australia. It first appeared in the United States in New York City in 1999. From there it spread rapidly across the country. In most cases the West Nile virus may cause no symptoms or may cause only a mild illness with symptoms similar to the flu. Less often, the virus causes encephalitis or meningitis that can be a serious health threat.

## Let's Work Together

West Nile virus is here in Fairfax County. To protect the public health, aggressive efforts are underway to reduce the mosquito population. Mosquitoes breed in still, shallow water. Frequently, mosquitoes can be found breeding in storm sewers, storm water ponds, puddles, roof gutters, tires — almost anywhere.

The County is taking action by treating storm sewers, ponds and other potential breeding sites with larvicides that will inhibit breeding. The Health Department will conduct surveillance throughout the County to help ensure your safety.

## County action alone will not be enough. We need your help.

Mosquitoes are often called "Backyard Breeders." They breed and feed in your yard. Take the time to make your yard mosquito free. Eliminate standing water; treat your property with Mosquito Dunks® or any other approved mosquito control product.

## ELIMINATE BREEDING SITES AT HOME



DISPOSE OR RECYCLE OLD TIRES



CLEAN YOUR GUTTERS



KEEP WATER FROM PONDING



INSTALL YELLOW BUG LIGHTS



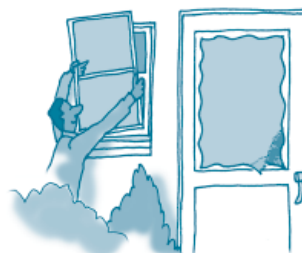
FIX LEAKING FAUCETS



CLEAN BIRD BATHS WEEKLY



ADD FISH OR A RECIRCULATION PUMP TO PONDS



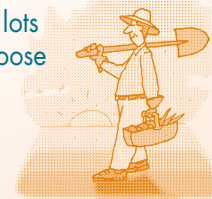
REPAIR SCREENS

## Protect Yourself and Your Family

The threat of West Nile virus is increasing and we should take all reasonable steps to protect ourselves. The Health Department continues to monitor the occurrence of West Nile virus and asks residents to be more aware of the need to eliminate mosquito breeding areas around their homes. Mosquitoes are poor fliers, so if they are a problem where you live, they most likely were bred in a standing water source on or around your property. The most effective way to control mosquitoes is to eliminate or treat the standing water where the larvae live. Otherwise, once adult mosquitoes have emerged, chemical controls give only temporary relief. Running streams and creeks with any water movement or ponds with predators such as fish, frogs and dragonflies are less suitable habitats for mosquitoes.

In addition to eliminating potential breeding sites, the Health Department recommends observing the following precautions to avoid mosquito bites:

- ✓ When visiting an area with lots of mosquitoes, wear long, loose and light colored clothing.
- ✓ Use yellow "bug lights" for outdoor lighting.



- ✓ Use an insect repellent containing up to 30% DEET for everyone except infants younger than 2 months.



- ✓ Make sure all window and door screens are in good repair and free from cracks and holes which may allow mosquitoes to get inside.

